

“THE GOOD SENSE OF THE PEOPLE”

Directions: Read the documents below and answer the following questions.

Thomas Jefferson to Edward Carrington, 1787

...I am persuaded myself that the good sense of the people will always be found to be the best army. They may be led astray for a moment, but will soon correct themselves. The people are the only censors of their governors: and even their errors will tend to keep these to the true principles of their institution. To punish these errors too severely would be to suppress the only safeguard of the public liberty. ...The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them.

Source: “Thomas Jefferson to Edward Carrington.” *The Founders’ Constitution*.
http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/amendl_speechs8.html

Federal Communications Act: Candidates for Public Office (1934)

If any licensee [media outlet] shall permit any person who is a legally qualified candidate for any public office to use a broadcasting station, he shall afford equal opportunities to all other such candidates for that office in the use of such broadcasting station: ...[The media outlet] shall have no power of censorship over the material broadcast. ...

US Code: Title 47, Sec. 315

1. According to Jefferson, what is the only safeguard of liberty? Why?

2. The Federal Communications Act is a federal (national) law. Would Jefferson agree or disagree with this regulation? Why?
